DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 125 733 JC 760 411

TITLE Better Use of Our Time Survey.
INSTITUTION Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior Coll., Perkinston.
PUB DATE 30 Jun 76
NOTE 6p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Problems; *College Administration; Community Colleges; *Efficiency; *Junior Colleges; Organizational Effectiveness; *Time
IDENTIFIERS Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College; *Time Utilization

ABSTRACT

Recognizing the need for all college officials to make better use of their time, the president of Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College sent a two-item questionnaire to all 55 administrators and non-teaching professionals at the college. He asked them to list in priority order: (1) the three activities or problems that diverted their time from their jobs during the work day, and (2) three suggestions for making better use of their time. In answer to the first item, 75% of the 28 respondents identified unscheduled visits from faculty members, other administrators, or friends. Other responses to this item included: short-notice special studies and reports, unscheduled activities, an overall excess of paperwork, too many meetings, unclear job responsibilities, and communications breakdowns. In answer to the second item, 61% cited a need to plan their work, to develop a list of jobs and put them in priority order, and then get them done in that order. Other responses to this item were: more support personnel, better job descriptions to pinpoint responsibilities, more effective and concise communications, fewer and shorter meetings, better utilization of office space, and longer notice on rush jobs. The report includes a complete list of the responses and some recommendations for better time utilization. (DC)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED125733

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

MISSISSIPPI
GULF COAST JUNIOR COLLEGE
CENTRAL OFFICE

Title: BETTER USE OF OUR TIME SURVEY

Institutional Research Report No. 75/76-21

June 30, 1976

1. PROBLEM. The President, recognizing the press of time on him, and the need to make better use of his personal time on the job, personally assessed the use of his time. He asked all administrators and non-teaching professionals to do the same and respond to a simple questionnaire by answering two questions. In priority order, list the three activities, problems, diversions, etc. that divert your time from your job during the work day; and, in priority order, what three best suggestions could be made to make better use of each person's time. Total anonymity was desired in that the questionnaires were sent out to addressees with single pre-addressed sheets back to the Central Office.

2. DISCUSSION. Fifty five questionnaires were sent out; 28 replies were returned, providing a 50.1% response to the President's request.

3. Following are responses to the questions concerning activities, problems, diversions, etc. that interfere with a day's work:

a. 75% of the respondents identified unscheduled visits from faculty members, other administrators and other social visits. Many of these are caused by the location of the respondent; where he or she is located close to traffic and they appear to attract diversions. Lack of privacy was cited in relation to problem. Several comments were made that many of these distractions were of a business nature, but they did interrupt the day to day work. One respondent said that he needed better self-discipline to handle this problem and still not be abrupt with visitors. This general area was the most mentioned, first priority problem.

b. 39% of the respondents cited short notice special studies, reports, unscheduled activities and an overall excess of paper work that did not appear to be too important. Again, most of the respondents in this category listed these problems as first priority.

c. 25% of the respondents mentioned meetings - too many meetings; meetings that lasted too long, were not as meaningful as they might be. Problems associated with meetings were listed more as a second priority than first or third. Several respondents said that meetings were essential, BUT.....

d. 18% said that paperwork associated with personnel work, and performing clerical work that might be done better and much cheaper by secretaries or student personnel workers diverted major proportions of their time.

e. Another 18% referred to a breakdown of communications; both as to policies and day to day assignments.

JC 760 411

f. 11% said that either their job descriptions were not clear or that the administrative unit caused them concern and in some instances lost them time in trying to find out who had authority to get given jobs done.

g. Other items identified were: Political activity, collecting delinquent dues from vocational students, participating in community activities (such as church, civic clubs, etc.), supervising students both on and off campus, failure to others to perform their assigned duties, distant parking, family and personal matters, maintenance and janitorial inefficiency, inaccuracy in the catalog, attitude of employees and working with outside agencies who rent college facilities. And one respondent replied that filling out silly questionnaires took his time away from his day to day job.

4. Following are suggestions made to enable non-teaching professionals to get their jobs done more effectively:

a. 61% cited a need to plan their work, develop list of jobs and put them in priority order, and then get them done in that order. Daily and weekly evaluation of planning for work and actual work accomplished was recommended.

b. 21% cited needs for more personnel, especially secretarial and clerical assistance to allow them more time to perform professional tasks assigned. Assistance in the Perkinston Library was also suggested to aid in providing library services to George County.

c. 21% suggested preparation of more clearly defined job descriptions and policies that will minimize or eliminate questions as to who is responsible for what.

d. 15% suggested more effective and concise communications, and better written procedures on jobs to be done.

e. 14% suggested fewer and shorter meetings with longer lead time on meetings.

f. 10% each made references to improvements in the following areas:

(1) Revise office space to provide for better work conditions and privacy.

(2) Provide longer lead time or longer notice on rush jobs to be done.

g. Other suggestions made were:

More budget for instructional supplies and materials and get faculty involved in keeping up with their expenses.

Firmer policy college-wide on dealing with subordinates.

Looseleaf catalog for administrators and counselors; get counselors involved in development of the catalog.

Provide more literature on non-credit courses; almost none now.

Have all students pay for entire semester at registration.

Spend more time talking with students on their problems.

Develop alphabetical list of all students in total headcount.

Rearrange physical facilities to better suit needs of the students.

Limit length of salesmen's visits and have secretary call to inform of others waiting.

Minimize "social visits" of other administrators and faculty without being rude.

Have heating and cooling equipment checked quarterly by qualified experts.

Hire competent janitorial and maintenance personnel.

Change "Receiving" from maintenance to Finance and hire full time person to handle receiving.

Give less attention to details and give more stress to bigger items.

Become a better salesman for the College throughout the community.

Become more involved in the total college operation rather than devoting 100% attention to my job only.

Recognize that what may appear to be small problems to me, are BIG problems to those presenting it. Be more tolerant.

Appreciate my job and be willing to produce more.

Exercise more self-discipline on myself and demand more of myself.

5. Since most of the respondents identified a need for better planning of their time, the following thoughts are offered from R. Alec MacKenzie's book, The Time Trap.

Write down the most important things that need doing tomorrow and number them in priority order. Then do them in that order. If you don't get through, revise the list for the next day and re-priority them. At least you will be doing the most important things first.

Good results without good planning come from good luck, not good management.

People don't plan because they value their freedom to choose what they want to do; planning takes this choice away from them on a minute by minute basis. You have just got to do the day to day things without planning because it takes too much time to plan. This results in constantly putting out fires, rather than planning fire (or excess work) prevention.

Essential steps involved in planning for better utilization of one's time, according to MacKenzie, are:

1. Analyze the present situation (where I am now).

2. Develop relevant assumptions (what conditions are likely to exist within the time span of the plan.)

3. Establishing objectives (what I want to achieve).

4. Develop alternatives (what different ways might attain these objectives.)

5. Making and implementing the decision.

6. Establishing review and control procedures.

A few comments might be in order concerning the above six steps. First, are these steps designed for planning one day at a time, or are they designed for making a grand monthly or weekly schedule? It makes little difference whether we try to schedule for a short period of time or for a longer period of time, we need to ask ourselves these questions: Where am I now, or what have I got to do? How much time do I expect it will take to get that job, or those jobs done? What must I do first, second, third, and so on? Hopefully, at least more than one way to do any given job will be considered rather that grabing onto the first ready solution that comes to mind. And then, we need to do it. There is where most of us stop. We rarely mentally discipline ourselves to review our actions and try to put some kind of control on how long we spend on the various aspects of our job.

"I am too busy to answer all of the questions mentioned above", we say. But, are we? It takes but a fleeting second for the many jobs we have daily to run through our minds. They do that anyway. And they bug us until our conscience becomes so conditioned that they come in one ear and go right out the other ear, without making any impression whatsoever. And that is when we start missing suspense dates, when we start doing things a day late and a dollar short, or we simply do not do many things that we ought to do because they are are our job.

And who will know if we let some of those little tasks slide? Who has time to be an inspector general for the college? Each of us is a professional or we would not be on the payroll. The boss, starting with the President and going on down the line, trusts the professional employee to do his or her job--without being bugged on the little details.

Perhaps this trust is betrayed--not overtly by our saying, "I'll really put a good one over on them today--I just won't do what I am supposed to do. They trust me and no one will know, because no one will check me out today." No, that will rarely happen. But what will happen is that we come to work; we mentally inventory all of the things we did not get done yesterday, the day before and the four days before that. We know that there is an imposing list of things to be done today. Some of these things are more important than others. The phone rings; wrong number; they wanted to talk to someone else, but the social call took 11 minutes. A co-worker comes in to see if the spouse is better; if the kids are doing well in school; if we are going to get two or three days off following graduation; if we got any shrimp the last time we went shrimping. Oops, that took 20 minutes and I have not had my first cup of coffee of the day. Walking to the coffee room, pouring it and putting in sugar and cream and stirring it took only 2½ minutes, but the little bull session with the faculty members there took another 22½ minutes.

And, so it goes until 75% of our administrators and other non-instructional professionals listed unscheduled visits from faculty members, other administrators and other social visits as a major cause of lost time on the job.

It is a problem that each of us must face and face squarely to get our jobs done more effectively.

DISTRIBUTION:

ALL ADMINISTRATORS

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

AUG 27 1976

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES